

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GT, BH, VE
SUBJECT: GOV AND GUATEMALA/BELIZE DISPUTE

REF: STATE 250713

1. IN A GENERAL CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN
MINISTER OCTOBER 15, I RAISED THE QUESTION OF
BELIZE, SINCE HE WAS DEPARTING FOR A CENTRAL
AMERICAN TOUR THE FOLLOWING DAY, AND ASKED HIM
HOW HE SAW THE DISPUTE. IN REPLY THE MINISTER MADE
THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A) THE BELIZE PROBLEM CONCERNED THE GOV FROM TWO
POINTS OF VIEW. FIRST, IT WAS A MATTER THAT AFFECTED
THE ENGLISH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN AND A CRISIS OVER BELIZE
COULD BE DISRUPTIVE IN THAT REGION. SECONDLY, IT WAS
SIMILAR IN KIND TO VENEZUELA'S DISPUTE WITH
GUYANA. IN THE LATTER CASE, HE NOTED, THE
"MILITARY" (SIC) WERE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO HOW
SUCH QUESTIONS WERE RESOLVED.

B) SEVERAL MONTHS AGO HE SAW GUATEMALAN
PRESIDENT LAUGERUD AND CONVEYED TO HIM PRESIDENT
PEREZ' ADVICE THAT THE WORLD HAD CHANGED, THAT THIS
ISSUE WAS NOW SUPERCHARGED AND COULD INVOLVE THE WHOLE
CARIBBEAN, THAT THEREFORE GREAT PRUDENCE AND MODERATION
WERE REQUIRED, AND THAT THE DISPUTE SHOULD BE SETTLED.

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C) HE HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED BY PRESIDENT PEREZ TO SEE LAUGERUD AGAIN ON THIS TRIP AND CONVEY ESSENTIALLY THE SAME MESSAGE.

D) PRICE WAS HERE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. ALTHOUGH HE (THE MINISTER) WAS NOT HERE AT THE TIME AND DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT, HE UNDERSTANDS PRICE SOUGHT PEREZ SUPPORT FOR A SOLUTION THAT WOULD NOT RPT NOT INVOLVE TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS TO GUATEMALA, ALTHOUGH PRICE WAS PREPARED TO MAKE VARIOUS KINDS OF ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS.

3) THE MINISTER DID NOT KNOW WHAT KIND OF FORMULA WOULD RESOLVE THE MATTER, AND HE WAS NOT SURE THAT THE OAS COULD BE USEFUL BECAUSE OF THE MEMBERSHIP QUESTION. HE THOUGHT PRICE WOULD PROBABLY SEEK INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT PERHAPS IN NEW YORK. IN ANY CASE, MODERATION AND COOL HEADS ON ALL SIDES WERE NECESSARY.

2. THE MINISTER DID NOT INDICATE WHAT CAP'S PRECISE RESPONSE WAS TO PRICE'S REPRESENTATIONS (POINT D ABOVE). WHAT HE IMPLIED, HOWEVER, WAS THAT CAP MADE NO DIRECT COMMITMENTS FOR ONE SIDE AS AGAINST ANOTHER. (SINCE ESCOVAR WAS NOT PRESENT, I AM NOT SURE HOW FULLY INFORMED HE WAS OF THE CONVERSATION'S DETAILS AND NUANCES. WE WILL TRY TO DEVELOP ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AS THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF.)

3. AS TO GENERAL COMMENT ON REFTTEL, WE THINK IT FAIRLY CLEAR THAT PEREZ WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PROMOTING A SOLUTION IF HE COULD, SINCE BOTH THE CENTRAL AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN AREAS ARE OF PRIME INTEREST TO HIM. WHAT HE CAN DO TO PROMOTE SUCH A SOLUTION IS OF COURSE CIRCUMSCRIBED BY THE BASIC CONTRADICTION OF INTERESTS BETWEEN CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN NATIONS, AND THE CONSEQUENT DIFFICULTY OF "TILTING" TOWARD ONE OR THE OTHER IF HE WANTS TO RETAIN MAJOR INFLUENCE WITH BOTH. VENEZUELA'S PUBLIC ESPOUSAL OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION,

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ON THE ONE HAND, AND HOW A BELIZE SETTLEMENT MIGHT IMPACT PRECEDENT-WISE ON THE VENEZUELAN/GUYANA PROBLEM ON THE OTHER, ARE ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS CONDITIONING HIS OPTIONS.

4. WE THINK IT UNLIKELY THAT THE GOV WOULD OPENLY OPPOSE GUATEMALA OR LOBBY AGAINST HER IN UN CORRIDORS. NOR ARE WE SURE CAP WOULD PLACE DIRECT ECONOMIC

PRESSURE ON GUATEMALA IN THE SENSE OF DENYING ECONOMIC BENEFIT; INDEED HE WOULD PROBABLY BE UNABLE TO DO SO WITHOUT ENDANGERING HIS IMAGE AND INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL AMERICA GENERALLY. THE OFFER OF ECONOMIC HELP AS AN INDUCEMENT TO GUATEMALA IS, HOWEVER, NOT SO FAR OUT. BASICALLY, WE THINK THE GOV WILL COUNSEL MODERATION, TAKE LAUGERUD'S TEMPERATURE AND EXPLOIT ANY OPPORTUNITY THEY SEE AS A CONSEQUENCE, INCLUDING GOOD OFFICES IF THEY JUDGE THE OPPORTUNITY IS THERE.

5. NO ONE HERE HAS MENTIONED THE TORRIJOS "PLAN" OR CONNECTION, AND GIVEN REFTEL'S CAVEATS WE HAVE NOT RAISED IT. WE THINK IT UNLIKELY THAT VENZUELA WOULD USE ITS TROOPS AS PART OF A COMPOSITE MILITARY GUARANTEE FORCE.

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